



EDITORIAL



FAITH IN HUMAN NATURE.

"Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake." (Gen. xviii, 32.)

Faith is the supreme creative function of the human mind. It is the energetic concentration of our powers of affirmation upon the substance of life. It is an emphatic way of saying Yes, in defiance of all the voices issuing from the dark places of the world that cry No. By faith alone can the totality of existence be rescued from vanity and nothingness. Look out upon the world at large, and what is there to prevent us from accepting it for what it apparently is: a heap of troubled lust, that somehow has become the chaotic stage of man's pathetic endeavors? Survey the work of man itself—these cities, these warehouses, these homes that hold him and his offspring for a brief spell; and why not dwell with scorn upon the ridiculous creature who, having risen out of the dust, builds himself perishable monuments of dust? Nature and human nature in juxtaposition, as when we see summer-homes along the mighty ocean, or palaces ranging alongside of river and mountain, seem but to enhance each other's futility. In the one we find brute power, without truth or regret; in the other some strange sensitiveness or organization, which so pitifully tries to face the cold cruelty of the universe, and impose its own weakness upon the elemental strength of the latter; but how curiously barren all this looks to the detached observer! Now, why not accept the sober verdict of detached observation, and laugh at this idle stirring up of dust into something that bears the empty semblance of worth? Why not? Because Faith refuses to accept this verdict. Faith fills the vacuum. It throws itself into the hollows of life. It finds worth in the world, nay, it forces worth upon the world. It compels the world to accept the meaning which it ascribes to existence. Faith, by a magic all its own, raises all things out of the native dust into the luminous worth of the spirit.

Is this a species of self-delusion? No. It is a kind of self-realization. For without faith the self even has no value—a conclusion which the self, by all the instincts of its own vitality and endurance, refuses to brook. The Self finds in itself the need for faith, and thus out of itself it invests the world with meaning and content. The self cannot deny itself, therefore it cannot deny the universe. The self must accept itself, therefore it must accept the universe. Therefore is Faith creative, for it brings its own powers to bear upon the reshaping in the spirit of the totality of existence. To faith existence and all its accidents, the world and all its parts, are but raw material, which Faith with invisible fingers fashions at will: in accordance, that is, with its own highest aspiration. Thus dust becomes more than dust. Thus Law is raised to Liberty. Thus the mysterious Something that troubles the dust—both in brute nature and

human nature—appears ineffably sweet and tender, but withal heroic and death-defying, to the shining eye of Faith. Within and behind and above both kinds of nature, Faith finds a Third Something, a Divine Nature, which sheds light upon the darkest places. This is the sweet trouble of the dust; this is the throb of the world's life; this is the singing beat and pulse of the universe that men call Love.

Faith, then, binds into one indissoluble tie the following: God, World, Soul; or: Divine Nature, Universal Nature, and Human Nature. All three together are involved in the tremendous affirmation of Faith. They cannot be separated. They are subject to the same laws of the mind. We cannot deny two and accept one; we cannot accept one while denying any two. And the reason for this is that Divine Nature impenetrates all. There is but One Life—God's; and both Human Nature and Universal Nature are but manifestations of God; consequently, if we accept God, we must accept the divinity of the world and of man as well. Conversely, to deny the divinity of the world or of man, is to deny God.

There is no need to single out the imperatives of Faith in Human Nature above faith in any other part of reality, since, as said, all faith has one and the same source, and resides in objects that are not to be separated except to the prejudice of faith itself. The only reason for doing so is that possibly Faith is tested most severely by human nature. For our daily activities bring us into constant touch with human nature; so that its peculiarities and problems, its surprises and incalculabilities, shock us at every turn. Nor is it an exaggeration to say that any shock we experience to our faith in human nature tends to upset our faith in God. Faith in human nature, therefore, is a touchstone of all faith. Still, there is no other law for this kind of faith than for all others: in this case, too, Faith is a heroic affirmation. Do we happen to face a seemingly hostile universe that threatens to overwhelm us by its power? Faith cries, All things are for the best. Do we happen to be confronted by misfortune? Faith cries "Even though He slay me yet will I believe in Him!" And, similarly, do we happen to be grievously disappointed through human treachery and deceit? Faith still cries, Man is created in the divine image!

Abraham's faith in the corrupt Sodomites illustrates this point. He believed that even in this nest of moral foulness human nature would find noble exemplars. Such unshaken faith in human nature deserves to be imitated. The chief thing is to rise above repeated disappointments, and still assert the realities of faith. We must dedicate our whole life to the quest of the divine everywhere; and if we are content to search the whole world for signs of God, shall we not all the

more eagerly seek for God in the wondrous world of man's soul-life? Our search in the end must find its reward. To this end we must approach our fellow-men, and to none other, to find the spark divine that troubles the dust that is Man.—Joel Blau, in *The Hebrew Standard*.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT.

There is food for thought in an article recently published by Mr. Thorstein Veblen in the "Political Science Monthly" and latterly reprinted by the Academy of Political Science under the title "The Intellectual Pre-eminence of Jews in Modern Europe." Paying, at the outset of his article, a very high tribute to the sincerity and the self-poise of the Zionists in our ranks, Mr. Veblen comes to the conclusion that however the consummation of the Zionist ideal might add to the content of Jewish life, it would effectively put a quietus upon the Jews' influence upon the modern intellectual world to which he has through contact in every age and in every country, so notably contributed.

He holds that living in comparative isolation, he might develop a culture corresponding to that of Talmudic times, but his place as an explorer in the realm of modern science, would be irretrievably lost. We are not sure that we follow Mr. Veblen all of the way, but there is certainly much suggestiveness in what he has to say. He sums his thoughts up in this paragraph:

"As bearing on the Zionist enterprise in isolation and nationality, this fable appears to teach a two-fold moral: If the adventure is carried to that consummate outcome which seems to be aimed at, it should apparently be due to be crowned with a large national complacency, and possibly a profound and self-sufficient content on the part of the Chosen People domiciled once more in the Chosen Land; and when and in so far as the Jewish people in this way turn inward on themselves, their prospective contribution to the world's intellectual output should, in the light of the historical evidence, fairly be expected to take on the complexion of Talmuric lore, rather than that character of free-swung skeptical initiative which their renegades have habitually infused into the pursuit of the modern sciences abroad among the nations."

Whether or not, we endorse in their entirety, the sentiments expressed by Mr. Veblen, his article is worthy of reading by all who are interested in the outworking of Jewish destiny in these crucial times.—*Detroit Jewish Chronicle*.